



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

Min Hannaford speaks about her mother's life and legacy in the community during a memorial tea at the Fort St. John Senior's Hall on Jan. 6.

# Hannaford touched lives across B.C.

## Education and arts communities mourn loss of former trustee and advocate

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The arts, education, and environment communities have lost one of their biggest advocates with the passing of Heather Hannaford.

Hannaford, who passed away Dec. 26 at the age of 75, was one of the founding members of both the North Peace Potters' Guild and the Fort St. John Community Arts Council. She was also a School District 60 board trustee for 29 years and was the first member of the BC Arts Council board to come from Northern B.C.

"Her motto was 'take a risk, make a pot, and if it doesn't work out, there's always another pot where that came from,'" said Rosemary Landry, president of the arts council and treasurer of the

potters' guild.

"She's going to be fantastically missed."

Hundreds of people gathered at the Fort St. John Senior's Hall on Jan. 6 for a memorial tea to honour Hannaford's life and the impact she had on the community.

"If Heather were here, she'd probably be wondering what all the fuss was about," said Sandy Troudt, who acted as MC for the memorial.

Hannaford was born in 1941 in Wales, and came to Canada in 1965. She found her way to the Peace Region after getting a job driving a van for the Anglican Church, where one of the stops was the Hannaford Ranch. Troudt said she noticed the horses, as well as John, whom she married in 1966. They raised five children and ran the ranch together, which

is still going strong to this day.

Hannaford was a founding member of the North Peace Potters' Guild, along with Edna Adlard and Vonnie Dixon. In 1968, the trio established the first pottery studio in Taylor, where they learned the craft together.

"Pottery and clay was as much a scholarly pursuit as it was a creative passion," said Troudt.

Hannaford taught pottery at Northern Lights College in the early 80s until the program was shut down. The potters' guild spent 15 years without a permanent home, but Hannaford arranged to have all the equipment put into storage—interest in clay and pottery never waned in the community.

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# New music award to honour Hannaford

HANNAFORD from A1

She was also an integral part of the Community Centre Committee, which persevered through two referendums to see the North Peace Cultural Centre become a reality.

In 2002, Hannaford helped the arts council establish a new pottery studio in the original ArtsPost—the former Sew-It-Yourself Shop across the street from the post office. The studio was small, but the guild made it work until they moved to its current ArtsPost location in 2007.

Hannaford was also a huge advocate for education; she was a School District 60 board trustee for 29 years, advocating for public education and active trusteeship within the district and the province.

“There isn’t a school in this district where Heather wasn’t known,” said Ida Campbell, chair of the SD60 board. “She was one of the most active trustees I knew in this district or the province ... She touched the lives of fellow trustees and educators around the province.”

Through her work as a trustee, Hannaford advocated for French immersion programs, sports, fine arts, project-based learning, combined classrooms, scholarships, and the Cameron Lake outdoor education site.

She also insisted on learning everything she could on a subject, in order to make well-informed decisions.

Ken Boon, member of the Peace Valley Landowner’s Association and the Peace Valley Environment Association, spoke of Heather’s love for the environment, as well as the arts.

“Heather was one of those people that had friends in so many different sectors of the community, it speaks a lot to her involvement and engagement in the community,” said Boon.

When the PVLA was heading to court to fight against the Site C dam, Hannaford had said she wanted to help them out with the fundraising, so she set out and made mugs with an emblem that said “No Site C” on them.

“She made a lot and made it pretty clear she didn’t want them sold for cheap,” said Boon, adding the mugs sold like hotcakes.

Hannaford’s daughter, Min, made the trip from Montreal for the memorial and spoke on behalf of the family.

“As the matriarch of our family, she would always try to instill her passion, her hard work ethic, honesty and a very sensible way of thinking,” she said. “Not only did she instill her enthusiasm for the arts and education in her children and grandchildren, she sacrificed her own time and resources so we could have the opportunities to learn, play music, dance and another number of activities that allowed us to grow personally and professionally.”

Hannaford also had a great love of music, she was adamant that children should have some sort of musical education.

“It was when she saw that some of the music programming was being eliminated from the school curriculum that she decided to run for the school board,” said Trout.

She regularly attended and volunteered for the Performing Arts Festival and often helped the adjudicators with their notes on the performances.

It was this love of music that had led to the creation of the Heather Hannaford Music Award, which will be given annually to a student at North Peace Secondary School.

To contribute to the award, contact the Fort St. John Community Arts Council at 250-787-2781 or [info@fsjarts.org](mailto:info@fsjarts.org)